



STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
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Madam Chair, committee members, thank you for convening today to hold this hearing on Assembly Bill 266, relating to the provision of support services information to employees who are affected by a business closing or mass layoff.

This bill results from conversations with one of our area job centers who reported that they were running into resistance in their efforts to help displaced workers.

Earlier this year, a couple of employers in the Chippewa Valley announced layoffs. The job center tried to provide the laid off employees with information about the resources available to them, but their employers refused to distribute the information. We also heard from employees at a rapid response session following a layoff that they only found out about the unemployment services available to them through an ad in the newspaper, and not from their employer.

AB 266 will ensure that any future layoffs are handled in a more responsible way.

Under current law, a business facing impending layoffs must notify Department of Workforce Development (DWD), among other agencies. DWD then notifies the local workforce development board (job center) serving the area in which the employment site is located. This bill requires DWD to provide a copy of the layoff notice to that local workforce development board. In turn, the local workforce board is required to provide to the employer a list of area resources that provide help with career planning, job search, job skills training such as brushing up a resume, or reading and writing skills, among others. This bill also requires an employer to provide a copy of this list to the affected employees no later than 14 days after that employee's last day of work or the date of the final payment of the affected employee's wages, whichever is earlier.

We do not intend this bill to burden employers. I know, from conversations with employers in the Chippewa Valley, that layoffs pain them. They often refer to their employees as family, and I can see the concern on their faces when they talk about laying off employees. However, we also believe that workers shouldn't be put at the end of the line when it comes to weathering this economic crisis. They deserve timely information that can help them return to the workforce and play a role in turning our economy around.

Again, thank you for convening today and I hope that we can work together to pass Assembly Bill 266, ensuring that dislocated workers are given the respect and resources they deserve during a very stressful time.